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ABC is strong on both state and national legislative levels

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With both the presidential race and the nation's most closely watched Senate race shifting into high gear, the political season is upon us. Long-time members remember a time in the not-too-distant past when ABC's views merited little attention on Beacon Hill and beyond. I'm happy to declare those days behind us.

On the federal level, many ABC members are giving money, raising signs and doing whatever they can to help Senator Scott Brown in his fight for free markets and open competition. Others are helping native son Mitt Romney put an end to President Obama's executive order encouraging union-only project labor agreements on federally funded construction projects worth more than \$25 million.

On Beacon Hill, we were recently able to help kill a bill that would have enacted a "responsible employer ordinance" for all state-funded construction. REOs use kinder gentler language, but have the same effect as project labor agreements - shutting the open shop out of public construction projects.

Additional evidence of ABC's status was our inclusion on state task forces examining at the Division of Capital Asset Maintenance (DCAM), the "underground economy" and the commonwealth's independent contractor law. Late last year, ABC's Merit Apprentice Program earned state approval. Open shop contractors that participate in MAP will satisfy all state apprenticeship requirements, allowing them to compete on a level playing field with union firms for public work.

There are a number of reasons behind ABC's elevated status. In an era of tight budgets and high unemployment, lawmakers are open to ABC's message that fair and open competition that ensures best value for taxpayers.

We also invest the time to make our case effectively on Beacon Hill. Last year ABC testified and lobbied against over 70 bills that would negatively impact the open shop.

But we don't just say "no." We strongly support legislative measures that promote fair and open competition, like one that would enhance transparency in public construction by requiring collective bargaining agreements that are the basis for prevailing wage rates to be available online.

ABC also makes our members' case in professional manner. Last year, unions picketed and bannered Newburyport's Anna Jacques Hospital after the hospital decided to use an ABC-member contractor to perform the electrical work for its \$15 million expansion project. The strategy backfired when local residents mounted their own picket line to protest union tactics. They often employ the same tactics on Beacon Hill, where state officials appreciate our reasoned approach.

A critical factor in the elevated standing we have earned on Beacon Hill is the continuing support our members have shown for candidates who champion our goals. We know that level of involvement isn't easy in the midst of challenging economic times, but we want you to know that your dedication and sacrifice are being rewarded.

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